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CITE_{EXTENSION}



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April 1990 (Issue 1)

C

ommunicators Talk and Listen

Eldon Fredericks

More than 75 ag communication leaders, computer coordinators, and other staff members from about 40 different land-grant universities participated in four teleconferences with CITE Director Janet Poley last week. Their discussions started a dialogue that might help shape the direction of our institutions' communication and technology programs.

Poley outlined her agenda by listing three areas:

—Administrative matters.

—Update on:

Extension Service Strategic Planning Council (SPC).

Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP).

—Input from participants on communication related issues.

Communication Important to Leaders

In updating the callers on actions of the SPC and ECOP, Poley stressed the importance that Extension directors and other leaders place on communication as the System makes major shifts to issues-based programming.

States, as well as the federal partner, continue to deal with declining resources. Often technology is viewed as one way to make major impact in specific programs. However, leaders are looking for help with staffing and other decisions required to make educational delivery systems respond to clientele needs.

Poley also described a joint Extension Service/ECOP task force recently appointed by ES Administrator Myron Johnsrud and ECOP Chair Patrick Borich (Minnesota). Poley and Jerry DeWitt, associate Extension director at Iowa State University, cochair the task force which is called Futuristic Applications of Communication Technologies (FACT). Names of the members of the FACT group were included in *CITE Extension*, March 1990 (Issue 2).

Teleconference Call-In's Generate Long List

Poley has proposed a national invitational meeting for communication and computer technology leaders in September 1990. To check on the need for such a meeting and the interest in attending,

the teleconference focus shifted to input from callers. Poley asked for comments from each state as well as suggestions for agenda items that might be included in further regional as well as national discussions. During each of the four conferences a general sense of mutual interests and concerns emerged.

Participants were enthusiastic. They were pleased to have a way to talk about issues they face and wanted to know how others handled similar situations. The conversations also generated a list of more than two dozen overall topics compiled during the four teleconferences. Poley and her staff will attempt to summarize these and then give participants an opportunity to help develop a ranking and build a workable agenda for continued discussions and a future meeting.

Requests Directory Review/Update

Among the administrative matters, Poley requested that each state review the present *Directory of Land-Grant and USDA Communicators*, dated 1989. If there are

changes in personnel or staff assignments, states were encouraged to make the necessary notations and send a copy of their listing to Judy Rude, ES-CIT, Rm 3323 South Building, USDA, Washington, DC 20250-0900. And, she asked that computer staff names and position titles be included in each state listing. FAX numbers and electronic mail addresses were also requested. Where available, these will be included in the next revision of the directory. States that wish to send their updates via FAX may reach CITE at 202-475-5289.

Additional Ideas? Give Us a Call

That's a short review of 6 hours of telephone conferences held over 2 days. Because the callers seemed so enthusiastic, we pledged to have more call-in opportunities.

For those unable to participate in this first series of teleconferences, we hope this report will give you some flavor of the discussions. If you have ideas and issues you wish to add, let us know. For those who did participate, thank you. If you wish to add further comments, give us a call.

M^{ee}t CIT

Sheila A. Hill-Townes was born and raised in Anderson, SC, the third of 10 children—6 girls and 4 boys. Upon her graduation from Westside High in 1969, Washington, DC, called her—the only one of the brood to move out of state.

More School— Then USDA

Sheila enrolled in the OIC trade school here in

Washington, graduating in 1972. She started her computer career with USDA's Statistical Reporting Service, now known as the National Agricultural Statistics Service, in the fall of her graduating year. She moved to ES-USDA in April 1985 with the Planning, Development, Evaluation, and Management staff. Sheila became part of the Communication, Information, and Technology staff when it was organized in 1989.

Another Musical CIT'er

Mother of two sons, 18 and 19 years old, Sheila is another CIT'er who loves music—singing and listening to inspirational music. She loves reading inspirational books, working with and helping less fortunate people in her adopted city, sending and receiving cards, and walking to stay fit.



B⁺ CITExtension Gets Good Marks

The organizers of the University of Missouri's videoconference, *How To Do A Newsletter That Gets Read*, kindly offered participants a chance to get their newsletters critiqued as a bonus to the on-the-air advice. Editor Jodi Horigan submitted

two representative CITExtension issues.

CITE Cited

Cite scored "average" in the purpose category, "above average" for layout and subject matter, and "excellent" for writing style. Some suggestions

for improvement were offered. We'd like your input on one suggestion—that we keep the newsletter to four pages. If our readers keep interest through more than four, we'd like to know. Your opinions count in such decisions! Let Jodi know your feelings by mail, telephone, or FAX

(see page 1 nameplate for address or numbers).

Thanks Due

Our thanks to Linda Benedict and Jan Colbert for the excellent video teleconference and their critique.

CIT Updates CES-NET Info

A kit of updated information on using CES-NET, including a list of current users, is on its way to those states in which a CES-NET contact has been designated. This is an important part of overall CES

communication; and although approximately 600 passwords have been assigned to date, some CES program staff may not know that CES-NET exists.

CES-NET has replaced DIALCOM as the current CES electronic mail

system, and we are working toward eventual migration to BITNET/Internet. Users must obtain a password, learn what features CES-NET offers, or, in some cases, what documents/services a design-

nated contact can obtain for them from the network.

If any program staff indicate a desire to log on to CES-NET, please have them contact **Shelia Miller**, ES-CIT systems analyst, at 202-447-8155.

Purdue Asks How Specialists Should Respond "When Professional Issues Go Public"

Laura Hoelscher
Publication Editor
Purdue University

An April 7 "Farm Aid" concert sponsored by Willie Nelson and friends to dramatize the situation of American farmers may seem an unlikely catalyst to bring together Cooperative Extension Specialists at Purdue University.

This was the first Nelson concert to focus on environmental concerns, rather than financial issues, and it raised much media interest in food safety. In setting this meeting, the Purdue University Cooperative Extension Specialists Association Professional Improvement Committee also hoped examining post-concert media involvement would provide a springboard to discussion of larger issues.

"Star Power"

Participants watched a videotape of selected highlights of the press conference held by Farm Aid's organizers, including Nelson, Neil Young, and Indiana native John Cougar Mellencamp;

they then saw the press conference held the next day by the Indiana Farm Bureau, Inc. to respond to celebrities' claims. "Star Power" was made abundantly clear by the turnout for these conferences. "Willie and Neil and the boys" drew nearly 200 media representatives, while the Farm Bureau drew only about 20!

Panelists Respond

A panel of three specialists then shared what they learned about risk communication with this experience. Jim Chambers, Coordinator of Purdue's Food Safety Education Team, reminded the audience that the general public is "very vulnerable to misinformation" about food safety because they have become so far removed from food production and processing experience.

Steve Cain, interim head of the University's Department of Agricultural Communication Service, discussed the appropriate role of public institutions, and particularly of Extension specialists,

in dealing with opinions rising from occasions like the Farm Aid press conference.

- Specialists and researchers should cross traditional discipline boundaries when responding to requests for information.
- They should try to speak in a "unified voice" by asking colleagues to contribute to the answer(s).

Steve Lovejoy, Coordinator of Purdue's Center for Alternative Agricultural Systems, said, "We are here to educate. The public makes the decisions."

The Front Burner, Not the Hot Seat

Specialists should recognize another dangerous trap: reacting to every reasonable question or reservation as if it were a threat. Specialists should welcome attention raised by public concern because it may help gain funding for related research and education. Attention may suddenly move specialists from the hot seat to the front burner.

Answering First—and Fast

Joe Yahner, a water quality specialist, gave some tips about responding to telephone interviews. "Return all calls, but make sure you know who you're talking to." Specialists should answer questions first, because reporters might sometimes be too impatient for answers to listen carefully to introductory explanations.

Teachable Moments

Extension educators are well versed in the importance of making the most of the "teachable moment." In this case, participants were themselves part of a teachable moment by learning from one another. A reporter from the local newspaper also demonstrated the value of those moments. His story in the next day's *Lafayette Journal and Courier* was an account not just of the Nelson/Mellencamp concert, but was balanced with his acquired knowledge of Extension's commitment to educate and the public's responsibility to make informed decisions.

Write to Read

Developing Competitive Proposals—Demystifying the Grants Seeking Process—Nancy C. Saltford, deputy administrator, ES-USDA Home Economics and Human Nutrition staff.

Presentation to housing specialists teleconference from USDA, Washington, DC, March 1, 1990. A helpful, step-by-step guide to preparing grant proposals: (6-1/4 pages).

Missouri Partnership to Produce High Tech NR Graduates

The Soil Conservation Service (SCS) in Missouri entered into a partnership with Lincoln University and AT&T that should increase the number of skilled natural resource graduates, reports the *Soil and Water Conservation News*, April 1990 issue. SCS will provide technical assistance and \$125,000 to help the University develop a microcomputer lab. AT&T will donate computers, printers, and other equipment worth about \$250,000.

SCS Employees Will Train

SCS will have access to this state-of-the-art facility, which is expected to become a main computer training center for its employees in Missouri and other states. But the biggest SCS benefit is the highly skilled natural resource graduates they can garner to enhance their scientific staff.

"To meet needs outlined by the USDA *Workforce 2000* report, we need well-trained, highly motivated

female and minority college graduates," says Missouri State conservationist Russell Mills.

Housed In Lincoln's Bennett Center

Lincoln University, located in Jefferson City, is the oldest of a group of historically black colleges established under the Second Morrill Act of 1890. The microcomputer lab will be housed in Lincoln's Bennett Living-Learning Center, devoted to agricul-

ture and natural resource students.

"I'm truly pleased with the outstanding support given by SCS," says Lincoln University President Wendell Rayburn. "It reaches beyond the monetary contribution. It will provide the catalyst to get this program going. We will be creating a truly unique educational environment."

Video Viewing

The University of Arkansas CES is offering a recently completed videotape on starting up a manufacturing dairy that produces only milk. This kind of dairy has lower startup costs and produces

milk used for yogurt, ice cream, and cheese.

Extension Agent Hosts

The 10-minute feature highlights building and equipment costs, startup

herd costs, and approximate monthly income.

Agents can use the tape to generate interest in supplementing an existing chicken or swine farm with unused pasture land or as added income.

For a copy, contact Keith J. Boles, Extension Videographer, Communications Office, University of Arkansas CES, P.O. Box 391, Little Rock, AR 72203.

Sources

Soil and Water Conservation News, April 1990

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